

# Insurance costs likely to go up, GuideStone warns churches

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DALLAS—As churches plan their 2017 budgets, they should realize most of the insurance industry is reporting significant increases in core health care/medical insurance and pharmacy costs through the first quarter of 2016, according to GuideStone Financial Resources, the insurance/retirement program provider of the Southern Baptist Convention.

“GuideStone’s relationship with the national Blue Cross Blue Shield and Express Scripts networks provides deep discounting of medical and prescription costs,” GuideStone President O.S. Hawkins said. “This helps mitigate the impact of rising medical and pharmacy costs.

“Through GuideStone, our participants have access to the broadest medical and pharmacy networks in America, with no narrow networks or exclusions, enabling our participants to maintain their personal physician-patient relationships.”

Additionally, GuideStone remains committed to offering the Teladoc service that can help participants and employers save time and money for nonlife-threatening medical needs.

The service allows registered users to talk via phone or computer video connection to a live, U.S.-based, board-certified physician who can resolve many medical issues.

“As we design our medical coverage for 2017, and beyond, we are committed to continue to provide high-quality health care coverage at competitive prices for our participants, as well as for the employers we serve,” Hawkins said. “Through services like Teladoc, and by using

technological tools to provide our participants the opportunity to make healthier lifestyle choices, we are working to slow the impact of core medical inflation for the benefits of our participants and their employers.”

GuideStone will inform the churches, ministries and participants it serves about medical insurance rates for 2017 in mid to late September.

*Timothy E. Head is executive officer of denominational and public relations services at GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.*